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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0028
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

UNCLAS SAIGON 14903

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT THIEU MEETS WITH MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILORS

1. SUMMARY IN A MEETING WITH MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILORS, PRESIDENT THIEU SAID HE WOULD CONSIDER RESIGNING IF HE RECEIVES LESS THAN 65 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. THIEU FURTHER STATED HE WOULD STEP ASIDE TO AVOID BLOODSHED IF THE MILITARY WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH HIS PERFORMANCE, AND HE REPEATED HIS INTENTION TO RESIGN IF THE UNITED STATES CUTS ITS AID. END SUMMARY

2. ON SEPTEMBER 15, PRESIDENT THIEU MET WITH 450 MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILORS WHO HAD ENDORSED HIS DEMOCRACY SLATE. ACCORDING TO THE SEMI-OFFICIAL VIETNAM PRESS, THIEU REPEATED HIS ORIGINAL HE TO RESIGN IF HE RECEIVED LESS THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, AND ADDED THAT IF HE RECEIVED FROM 50 TO 65 PERCENT OF THE BALLOTS, "HE WOULD CONSIDER WHETHER OR NOT HE WOULD ASSUME THE POST OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC."

(2)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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3. THIS REAFFIRMED THAT THE ELECTION WOULD GO AHEAD AS SCHEDULED, BUT LEFT THE WAY OPEN FOR A POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT IF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AMENDED OR MODIFIED THE CONSTITUTION, IN WHICH CASE HE CLAIMED HE WAS READY TO CARRY OUT THE PROVISIONS OF ANY SUCH AMENDMENT. THE PRESIDENT DEFENDED HIS ACTIONS AS ENTIRELY LEGAL, AND TOLD THE COUNCILORS THAT HE HAD CONSULTED THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE, THE SPEAKER OF THE LOWER HOUSE, AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE

SUPREME COURT WHO ALL AGREED THAT HE WAS CORRECTLY IMPLEMENTING THE CONSTITUTION.

4. ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A COUP D'ETA, THIEU SAID THE ARMY HAD THE CAPABILITY OF TOPPLING THE GOVERNMENT, BUT IF THE ARMY FELT HE HAD NOT PERFORMED HIS DUTY SATISFACTORILY, HE WOULD VOLUNTARILY WITHDRAW TO AVOID BLOODSHED. AN ACCOUNT OF THE USUALLY RELIABLE CHINH LUAN FURTHER QUOTED THIEU AS SAYING IN THE EVENT THAT HE HAD TO LEAVE, HE WOULD TURN THE COUNTRY OVER TO THE MILITARY, RATHER THAN TO AN INDIVIDUAL. THE COUNTRY WOULD BE SAFE IN THE HANDS OF THE MILITARY SINCE IT IS ANTI-COMMUNIST, SAID THIEU, BUT TO TURN THE NATION OVER TO AN INDIVIDUAL WOULD BE PLACING IT ON "THE ROAD OF ADVENTURE."

5. ACCORDING TO BOTH VIETNA PRESS AND CHINH LUAN, PRESIDENT THIEU SAID HE WOULD RESIGN IF THE UNITED STATES CUT OFF ITS AID AS A RESULT OF HIS ELECTION PLANS.

6. THIEU ALSO IS REPORTED BY VIETNAM PRESS TO HAVE STATED THAT THE OTHER SLATES HAD WITHDRAWN THEIR CANDIDACIES BECAUSE "THEY INTENDED TO CAUSE DISORDER TO THE NATION AND DID NOT ACT AS POLITIANS OR PATRIOTS."
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